Round Table Event

Access for All: the benefits of improving accessibility of rail stations

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3rd-4th March 2016, Paris
Assessment of accessibility improvements at railway stations

- Overview of Presentation
  - Study objectives and elements
  - Research
  - Key results
  - General lessons
  - Q & A
Study Objectives and Elements

• The aim of this study:
  • To assess and quantify the benefits of the Access for All (A4A) programme to passengers and train operators; and
  • To consider how the programme could be improved to maximise these benefits

• The study itself involved the following:
  • Analysis of station footfall and Railcard use data;
  • Site visits / audits;
  • Station user research;
  • Station user classified counts; and
  • Economic appraisal of benefits for a selected set of A4A stations.

• The study encompassed six stations representing a cross-section of all A4A stations: Bridgend, Huddersfield, Kidderminster, Purley, Rutherglen and Vauxhall (London).
Station User Research and Counts

- Station user classified counts
  - Station users
  - Lift usage

- Passenger Interviews
  - Experience of station and importance of station elements
  - Noticeable improvements following A4A intervention and impact of this on travel

- User Categories:
  - Mobility impaired (users with walking aid, frail elderly users, etc.);
  - Wheelchair users;
  - Hearing impaired;
  - Sight impaired;
  - Encumbered (users with small children, heavy luggage, etc.); and
  - Unencumbered (everyone not included above).
## Sample stations

Sample of stations designed to be representative of all A4A stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Type of Works (main elements)</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridgend</td>
<td>2 lifts installed and a new footbridge</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huddersfield</td>
<td>2 glass lifts installed from subway to platform level, new stairways</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidderminster</td>
<td>2 lifts installed and a new footbridge</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purley</td>
<td>4 lifts (platform to subway) and substation, significant station refurbishment</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutherglen</td>
<td>1 lift installed, new ticket office and foyer renewal</td>
<td>March 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vauxhall</td>
<td>4 lifts (platform to subway) and substation, significant station refurbishment</td>
<td>July 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bridgend

Somewhat hidden lifts at back of stairs to footbridge

Fading yellow lines, tactile paving

Colour contrast

Automatic doors, level floor

Lack of dropped kerb by entrance
Huddersfield

Disabled parking outside station

Clear directional signage and help points available

Visible and easily accessible lifts

Somewhat hidden train boarding ramps
Kidderminster

Stairs obscuring view of the lifts

Clear signage and help-point on platform

The footbridge is dark and poorly lit.
Purley

Accessible ticket machine

Tactile strip, clear signage and staffed
information office on platform

Meeting Point, clear signage and
ramp available on platform
Rutherglen

Route from ticket hall with automatic doors and lift

Accessible tickets counter with induction loop and crutch holder

Stairs to footbridge with textured steps, contrast colouring and handrail

steer davies gleave
Vauxhall

Clear signage on platforms, centrally located help-point and ramp

Clear signage to platforms and around the station

Lifts to platforms are easy to locate and near seating
Station user counts

- Disabled users represent 1% of total passengers.
- Bridgend had the highest proportion at just over 2%.
- Encumbered users represented 5% of passengers overall.
- Ranging between 2.5% and 7% (see opposite).
Lift usage

- Overall, 5% of station users make use of the lifts
- Most users (73% on a weekday) are unencumbered
  - 4% are disabled
  - Remaining 23% encumbered
- At some stations only a proportion of disabled users utilise the lifts
  - Passenger interviews suggest there is an awareness issue
Passenger interviews - awareness

- Are you aware of any changes made to this station in the last few years to make it easier to use the station?
Passenger interviews – impact of improvements

- Have any of these improvements affected your use of this station?

![Bar chart showing the impact of improvements on different groups of passengers.]

- Don't know
- Decrease significantly
- Decrease slightly
- No change
- Yes, increased trips slightly
- Yes, increased trips significantly
Passenger interviews – impact of improvements

• Do you think these improvements, if any have encouraged other people with limited mobility or a disability to use this station more?
Economic appraisal

• Overall Benefit Cost Ratio of 2.4
• Range of results of sensitivity tests: 1.1 – 19.5
  • Highest value includes benefits for passengers without a disability
• Considerable variation between stations
• Key factors – station footfall and number of disabled and encumbered users
• But only part of the benefit
  • Unencumbered users
  • Social inclusion
  • Ageing population
Key Findings

- Better information to reap further benefits
  - Awareness of improvements amongst current users – 57% of mobility impaired aware, less for other users groups
  - New potential users – raise awareness within local community / station catchment
  - Awareness of the availability of aids – 26% of mobility impaired and 33% or encumbered used lifts
- Benefits a broad cross-section of passengers, not only those with a disability
  - Lift usage – 73% unencumbered, 23% encumbered, 4% disabled
  - Increased use of station following improvements – 7% unencumbered, 10% encumbered
Recommendations made

- Continuation of A4A programme
- Improved communication of station changes
  - On station – signage & information to existing users
  - Off station – information to potential new users in the local community
  - Online – review / update post implementation
- Develop guidance on appropriate communication / promotion complementary measures
  - An amount equivalent to 10% of capital cost set aside
  - Complementary communications plan
  - Role of station operator and TOC(s)
General lessons

• To maximize the benefit of investment need to consider both the “hard” infrastructure and the “soft” complementary measures
  • Communication, information, signage
  • Staff training and awareness.
• Designing for people with poorer mobility, sight, hearing promotes better designs for all.
  • End result is more use of public transport to the benefit of passengers, non-users and operators.
• Accessibility to a transport service is only as good as the weakest link
  • Need to consider the end to end journey.
• There is a wider benefit in creating a more caring society which everyone can be proud of.
Q&A

1) Do you have a recommended method to make appraisals of projects without before/after data? How would you estimate users in the absence of interviews?, which are no doubt a relatively expensive way to collect data?

- Observing (and counting) passengers using the facilities provided is a relatively low-cost way of assessing their value.

2) Is there data in the UK (from census or similar) about proportion of people who use a walking aid for transport? If so, could we estimate a maximum proportion of walking aid users for a catchment population, or estimate this based on age structures, for example?

- The Census does provide data on numbers of people with a long term illness or disability.
- In England and Wales 8.4% have a long term illness or disability which affects their mobility ‘a lot’ and another 9.5% ‘a little’.
Q&A

3) Did you consider access to the station itself, that is, the accessibility of the whole journey? Were any changes to local pedestrian networks included as part of station upgrades?
   - No, improvements were only on the station estate itself
   - This is a significant issue in the UK where stations are often poorly integrated with their surroundings

4) Do you have any thoughts on how to quantify different elements of accessible station design in a 'level of service' framework? Which aspects of infrastructure are in themselves the most cost-effective?
   - Need to consider here the weakest link point: lifts are expensive but if they are needed to provide access to platforms then they are cost-effective
Q&A

5) How important is the benefit-cost ratio in overall project appraisal in the UK? Are the benefits that you identify also included in appraisal of other transport schemes?

- They are a standard part of all transport appraisals in the UK and are a hurdle to overcome
- Not the whole story though, political support is also required

6) Have these findings been used by local or national transport policy makers to date? How do you see these data influencing prioritisation or delivery of accessible infrastructure in the UK?

- They have been used to help gain continued funding for the Access for All programme
- Not aware of them being used outside of this
Further questions

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